(b) whether Government have held any talks with the UK Government on this matter; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) The UK Home Office, in March, 2006, presented to the Parliament the new immigration guidelines "A Point-based System: Making Migration Work for Britain" and announced its implementation from 7th November 06. According to the new guidelines, for an extension of visa or for Indefinite Leave of Settlement, a person staying in the UK under Highly Skilled Migration Programme (HSMO) has to earn 75 points. The revised rules require the applicants to re-qualify through a stringent point-based system on the basis of his age, earnings and UK experience for thier further visa extension as against economic activity alone when they entered into the UK.

(b) and (c) The High Commission of Indian, London has taken up the matter with British Parliamentarians. It has been informed by the Govt. of UK that the point based system is designed to allow highly skilled people to migrate to the UK over long run. They have further informed that to those who are already in the UK, Government will be as helpful as possible. The necessity of not applying the amendments with retrospective effect, and the need to have some policy in the transition period in order to ameliorate the impact of these amendments on Indian professionals entering UK has been highlighted to the UK Government.

Devolution index for Panchayats

1866. SHRI P.R. RAJAN: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry are proposing a scheme for Panchayats to get extra funds by competing with each other;

(b) the details of the reported ' Devolution Index" constituted by his Ministry; and;

(c) whether Ministry is suggesting a separate funding plan to speed up the decentralization process?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) The Panchayat Empowerment and Accountability Incentive Scheme (PEAIS) is intended to incentivise State Government to empower Panchayats and incentivize Panchayats to be transparent and accountable in their transactions. To this end, it is proposed to operationalize PEAIS on the basis of a Devolution Index, which is being given final touches by the National Council of Applied Economic Research.

(b) The Fifth Round Table at Srinagar in October, 2004 made an initial attempt at drawing up a Devolution Index that would be fair, objective and removed from all political bias or subjective personal prejudice. The Srinagar exercise was then passed on for refinement to the National Council of Applied Economic Research. The index is expected to include all indicators covering the major areas relating to the empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

(c) No, Sir.

Officers going abroad on study leave

1867. SHRI KAMAL AKHTAR:
DR. VIJAY MALLYA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of IAS Officers, Doctors and other Government servants who go abroad availing study leave;

(b) whether the period of study leave is accounted while considering seniority;

(c) who bears the cost of their study and who is the agency that selects or permits Government servants to undertake study abroad; and

(d) whether it is a fact that even the quarter allotted to such officers while they are abroad is retained by them in absentia?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI): (a) The Central Government have given approval to 62 IAS officers to go abroad on study leave during the last five years. No centralized data is maintained in respect of Doctors and other Government Servants, as the